



of communities throughout the District. Isis and the DC SCORES team both bring together children of Black and Latino descent, which has the positive effect of erasing fears, combating prejudices, and uniting families.

The sport of soccer has given me more than I ever expected in return, and I can only imagine where it will lead me in the future. I have kept my need for competition alive by playing with a Peruvian amateur team called La Univarsitaro, which, like my former college team and the two teams I coach, is extremely diverse and dynamic. I am also a proud fan and season ticket holder of DC United, the Major League Soccer champion three out of the past four years. To my delight, the sport of soccer is thriving in this country and is alive and well in Washington, D.C., at all levels transcending age, ethnicity, race, gender, and class.

*When not on the soccer field, Walter A. Roberts III lives in Northwest D.C.*

## Who's Got Next? Pick-Up Basketball in Washington, D.C.

*by Tom Blagburn*

The competition is always intense, the rhythm almost hypnotic, the jukes and bounce of the ball practically non-stop! On playgrounds across America, and in Washington, D.C., in particular, the first yell is “who’s got next?” Who is choosing the next pick-

up basketball team? The game, frequently called “b-ball” in D.C., is an asphalt theater of jumpers, blocked shots, sweaty T-shirts, fast breaks, and awesome dunks. Players have been known to shovel snow off the court to start a pick-up basketball game. Over the past 30 years, I have shoveled off a few courts myself.

Pick-up ball is a highly competitive training sport where skills are developed and refined. Some of us progress; others seem to be able to go no further with their talent — a slice of life. A game is comprised of two, three, four, or five players. Nothing energizes the play like the chat-

ter and critiques from the sidelines. Shouts and screams such as “shoot the ‘J’” and “D-up” drive the play to new heights. Great performance is always rewarded with a boost in game reputation.

The game’s rich history is full of legendary players whose playground heroics often transcend the game itself. Elgin Baylor, John Thompson, Ernie Cage,

James “Sleepy” Harrison, “Monk” Milloy, Bernard Levy, Dave Bing, Jerry Chambers, Frank Williams, “Chicken Breast,” Ray Savoy, “Biggie” Cunningham, Bill Gaskins, Lonnie Perrine, Austin Carr, James Brown, Aaron Covington, and Melvin Middleton are just a few of D.C.’s finest. I remember clearly the rainbow jump shots of Joe Carr, the keen shooting accuracy of Art “Bunny” Perry, the adroit cross-over of Reggie Green, the bricks of seven-foot Art Beatty — each representative of so many players who loved the game. Ask anybody across the city, these players were the “b-ballers” of summer in their day.

Endless captured moments of play can be debated and disputed. Post-game analysis is part

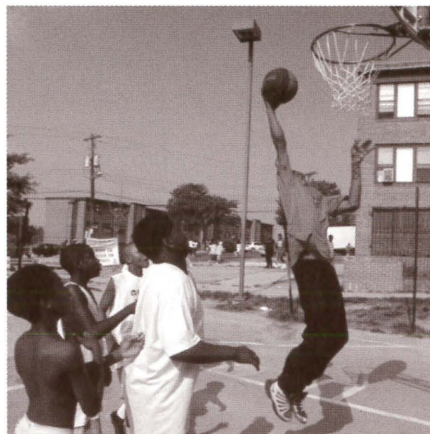


Photo: Young athletes enjoy a pick-up game at Lincoln Heights Day block party in Northeast D.C. Photo by Harold Dorwin



of the participation. There may never be a “best,” because someone will always have a story about another player who was better. It is the camaraderie of the game which gives all of us a special connection over time. Even today, after so many years of playing b-ball on the courts of D.C., I run into other players in board rooms and grocery stores; we still talk about the legendary players and games we remember.

D.C. playgrounds, for decades, have been the incubators of basketball talent. It was on the playgrounds at 10th & R, Luzon, Turkey Thicket, Happy Hollow, Sherwood, Banneker, Kelly Miller, and Bundy where so many first displayed their prowess. Average players were developed and nurtured to greatness by many unsung mentors and coaches, such as Bill Butler and Jabbo Kenner, who tirelessly gave of themselves. Because of their contributions, perhaps it can be said, “Everybody has game.”

In Washington, D.C., pick-up basketball is the game of choice. Like a boomerang evolution: no matter to which level of play the game has taken you, pick-up basketball always brings you home.

*Tom Blagburn plays pick-up b-ball on Sunday mornings at the Chevy Chase, D.C., playground. He has played for more than 30 years on playgrounds across the city from River Terrace to Chevy Chase.*

## “I Am a Proud Woman”

by Elizabeth Clark-Lewis

In the fall of 1979 my great-aunt Mary Johnson Sprow found a diary she had written while working as a domestic servant more than 60 years before. She was part of the outward migration from the South between 1900 and 1920, when cities such as Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia shifted from

reliance on European immigrants to African Americans for household service.

In 1910 nearly 90 percent of [Washington's] gainfully employed African-American women worked in domestic service. [But] she chafed at the attitudes of those, including her own family members, who believed that simply because she was a poor African-American female born in the rural

South, she should work as a live-in servant all her life. Living in meant being on call to one's employers 24 hours a day. Those women like Mary who ultimately made the transition from live-in service to day work sought the autonomy of setting their own schedule and tasks. Living in meant little if any privacy, few opportunities for a social life, and minimal independence. Live-out work meant that the worker had the freedom to quit an unpleasant situation; she did not rely on her employer for the roof over her head.

Then what is work? Who made work? To clean and scrub days in and days out. Above all who made the people that we toil for? That never knows what it is to want and yet is never thankful for nothing that we do, no matter how hard no matter how we try to please. When I look at them I see that they are made

[Mary's writings] stress the power and autonomy of a working-class woman.